Proposal to Change the Name of the Department of Health Sciences

Robert Leeman, Ph.D.

Professor and Chair

March 26, 2024

We propose to change our department’s name from the “Department of Health Sciences” to the “Department of Public Health and Health Sciences.” There are multiple reasons for this change. We anticipate that this change will support recruitment for our Master of Public Health Degree. Having recently attended the annual meeting of the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH), the vast majority of the outstanding academic public health programs are housed within schools and colleges of public health. Reorganization into a college or school of public health is not possible. This department name change would seem to be the next best option as it will add the term “public health” to our name, which will facilitate clearer recruitment messaging. This change also dovetails with our addition of an undergraduate major in public health to our academic offerings back in 2021. With this change, our two primary bachelor’s degree programs will both be represented in our department’s name. This change will also disambiguate our department’s name from that of our College, which has been a source of confusion. In exploring the addition of “public health” to our department name, we considered multiple options, including “Department of Public Health Sciences.” While some colleagues favored this name, others expressed concerns that such a change may inadvertently signal to pre-health students, who are more likely to gravitate to our health science rather than our public health bachelor’s degree, that our department is no longer a strong fit to their needs. Dovetailing with this concern, undergraduate student survey results were somewhat less favorable toward “Public Health Sciences” compared to “Public Health and Health Sciences.” Given this concern and the survey results, we opted for the latter option. We conducted a vote within the faculty and the name change was favored by 40 colleagues with 8 “no” votes and 4 abstentions.

Following the governance process in the college, March 14th college-wide meeting included the agenda item pertaining the department name change. Information above was shared with the college faculty and staff. Following this meeting a college wide vote was in support of department name change (194 votes received, 39% of eligible faculty and staff, which represented quorum: 174 votes “yes”, 90%; 7 votes “no”, 4%; 13 votes “abstain”, 7%)